

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): ~~A~~An isolated microorganism which ~~belongs to the genus~~ was named Rhizobium sp. OKH-03 and deposited as FERM P-19483, and which has the ability of degrading an aromatic polyester.
2. (canceled).
3. (original): A method of degrading an aromatic polyester, comprising the step of bringing the microorganism of claim 1 into contact with an aromatic polyester to degrade the aromatic polyester.
4. (original): The method according to claim 3, wherein the aromatic polyester contains 95 wt% or more of an ethylene terephthalate recurring unit.
5. (currently amended): The method according to claim 3, wherein contact between the microorganism and the aromatic polyester is carried out on an LE medium which is a medium comprising extracts of lettuce and egg yolk.
6. (original): The method according to claim 3, wherein contact between the microorganism and the aromatic polyester is carried out at 20 to 37°C.
7. (original): The method according to claim 3, wherein contact between the microorganism and the aromatic polyester is carried out at a pH of 6 to 9.

8. (original): The method according to claim 3, wherein contact between the microorganism and the aromatic polyester is carried out while the microorganism forms a bio film on the surface of the aromatic polyester.